

Nicolas de Montreux's *La Sophonisbe*: An English Translation of Act III

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Signed

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### Abstract

This French-English translation focuses on Act III of Nicolas de Montreux's *La Sophonisbe*, assembled by Donald Stone (Geneva: Droz, 1976). This section chronicles a debate by a few Carthaginian leaders attempting to identify and decide the means to proceed with the war with Rome. Most of their topics relate to rendering Sophonisba over to the Romans and their people's impending enslavement. The play in its entirety is composed in five acts, with each act's translation being first written by individual group members. Later, each act was discussed and edited by the rest of the group in a discussion setting. This translation was met with a few complications, mostly considering a lack of unique words used in the French language. Another significant problem that often had to be overcome was Montreux's syntax. His sentence formulation was often reversed in order to form his rhyme scheme and to reflect occasionally Latin syntax that characterizes French humanist drama.



## **Acknowledgements**

Learning a new language is an adventure;

Thus this thesis is dedicated to those who have furthered my journey:

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### **Introduction**

The main goal of this translation was to provide Anglophones the opportunity to read a word of French literature that has yet to be translated into English. Sophonisba's story has been told in various forms since the Second Punic War; however, Nicolas de Montreux's tragedy has been inaccessible to a large group of people. Now that it has been translated into English, it has become another opportunity for Anglophones to appreciate French culture and literature. Aside from simply appealing to potential Anglophiles, though, this tragedy also may appeal to people interested in ancient Rome or in theatre.



### Difficulties of Translation

As one would imagine, the ability to translate a work primarily depends on the level of mastery that one has in two given languages. Since *La Sophonisbe* was written in the early seventeenth century, the French employed in this work is vastly different than one would be accustomed to seeing in modern French. The various changes include awkward syntax, spelling variations, unused vocabulary, and a lack of uniqueness in the French vocabulary. The latter of these yielded particular problems for the translator in attempts to decide on appropriate words to convey particular meanings in English.

In respect to Montreux frequent use of archaic syntax, he could have been doing this for a few reasons. Primarily, it seems that he used sentence inversion in order to complete his rhyme scheme. Secondly, the French language at the time may have used a slightly different syntax than that which is currently used. Lastly, he could have used it as an artistic medium in order to make his writing appear more complex. The change in syntax led to a few problems, as the sentences would often have odd placements for direct objects and indirect objects.

French has also changed quite a lot in the last four hundred years. With the increasing use of accents in the last couple of hundred years, certain letters have started becoming accents. The main letter that has been changed is “s” into a circumflex, such as the change of “fust” to “fût.” Another example is the change from “s” into an accent aigu, such as the transformation of “tesmoignage” to “témoignage.” Over time the letter “y” has also become an “i.” There are also differences in the conjugation of verbs between modern and ancient French; for example, the imperfect has changed from endings like “tenoit” to “tenait.”

Some of the vocabulary has also changed meaning over time. One of the main examples is related to the word “ravis,” which now means “to delight.” However, in Montreux’s time, it



meant something closer “to forcibly take away.” Another word that has changed is “superbe.” Now, similar to the English rendition, it means “superb,” although in sixteenth-century French it meant “proud” or “haughty.”

The most difficult part of the translation process for me was due to the lack of single or clear meaning of French words. Since English has been affected by so many languages, it naturally has many words with slightly different meanings. French, though, has not encountered this extreme language diversity. Therefore, one word could potentially have many meanings. This is often the case with the words “vif,” “malheur,” and “mal.” They tend to be very difficult words to translate, as they can assume many English meanings, some very different than others.



### Works Cited

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Translation: French-English

*La Sophonisbe*

By Nicolas de Montreux  
Translation by Matthew Gorham

ACTE III

MASSINISSE, MISIPSA, GELOSSES, LELIUS

[Massinisse, Misipsa, Gelosses]

MASSINISSE

Quoy donc, ingrate Rome et quoy, superbe ville,  
1150 Apres avoir senti à ton secours utile  
L'invaincu Massinisse et par lui surmonté  
L'ennemy qui tenoit serve ta liberté,  
Ton empire, tes loix et qui rendoit ta gloire  
Orgueilleuse autrefois servie de sa victoire  
1155 Et qui tenoit desja ton premier los ravi  
D'avoir dessous ton fer maints peuples asservi,  
Surmonté mille rois, et d'une fiere guerre  
Donné le joug superbe aux princes de la terre,  
Quoy donc, Rome, quoy donc, apres que ma valeur  
1160 T'a reprise des mains de ce cruel malheur,  
T'a remise en honneur et fait la seure voye  
A ton repos, jadis de l'ennemy la proye,  
Quoy donc, ingrate, quoy, apres tant de travaux,  
Apres tant de bienfaits, de services loyaux,  
1165 Apres tant de combats agitez de furie  
Où l'on a vu cent fois mettre en hazard ma vie,  
Mon honneur, mon estat, couvert de sang, d'horreur  
De poussiere sanglante, et d'espoisse fureur,

ACT III

MASSINISSA, MISIPSA, GELOSSES, LELIUS

[Massinissa, Misipsa, Gelosses]

MASSINISSA

What say you therefore, ungrateful Rome, and what, proud city,  
After having benefitted from the aid of the undefeatable  
Massinissa, and thanks to him, we overcame  
The enemy who kept your freedom,  
Your empire, your laws, and your empire in chains, and who  
Made your proud glory subservient to his victory.  
And who already held your first ravished acclaim, snatched away,  
For making many people subject under the force of your sword,  
After having triumphed over a thousand kings, and a proud war, and  
After having inflicted the yoke upon the earthly princes,  
What say you therefore, Rome, what say you then? After my valor  
Reclaimed you from the hands of the cruel misfortune,  
Restored your honor, and secured the road to  
Your peace—you, formerly the prey of the enemy.  
What then, ungrateful one, what, after so many labors,  
After so many good deeds, so much loyal service  
After so many battles stirred up by madness,  
When one saw me risk my life a hundred times,  
My honor, my estate, covered in blood in the horror  
Of blood-stained dust and thick fury.



Apres tous ces bienfaits, tu veux donc implacable,  
 1170 Pour loyer merit  me rendre miserable,  
 Me lancer au tombeau apres m'avoir ost   
 D'une ingrate fureur ma chere libert ,  
 Apres m'avoir ravy Sophonisbe ma femme,  
 Que le ciel destina pour le bien de mon ame ?  
 1175 Tu le veux, tu le veux, et d'une mesme loy  
 Tu veux tirer encor du service de moy,  
 Espuiser tout mon sang et affoiblir mes veines  
 Pour encore servir tes fureurs inhumaines ?  
 Quoy, tu veux donc encor que de voix et d'effet  
 1180 Je me rende fauteur de ton cruel forfait,  
 Deffenseur de ton crime, et que j'allume encore  
 Dans l'Affrique le feu qui brulant la devore ?  
 Tu veux que j'aille encor ensanglantant mes mains  
 Dans le sang respandu des vaincus Affriquains,  
 1185 Que je combatte encor en ton nom l'adversaire,  
 Et pendant emporter ma despouille plus chere,  
 Enlever Sophonisbe et parmy son meschef  
 Presser d'un joug cruel son miserable chef,  
 La trainer en triomphe et d'une main semblable  
 1190 Mon repos immortel qui te fut secourable,  
 Mon salut et mon bien et pour prix guerdonneur  
 De tant de maux souffers me desrober l'honneur,  
 Me laisser seulement un regret lamentable,  
 D'avoir si bien servi et me voir miserable,  
 1195 Un despit outrageux en me voyant deffait  
 Par ceux de qui ma main a le pouvoir refait,  
 Me voyant asservi par ceux que ceste lame  
 A retirez du joug mortellement infame,

After all of these good deeds, you then want to be relentless  
 In making me wretched for your rightful reward  
 In throwing me into a tomb after robbing me  
 Of my freedom against a heartless fury,  
 After stealing Sophonisba, my wife, from me,  
 Who Heaven appointed for me to have for the good of my soul?  
 You want that, you want that, and by the same rationale,  
 You still want to draw upon my service  
 To drain all my blood and to weaken my veins  
 In order to serve your inhuman madness again.  
 What, you still want--in words and action--  
 Me to become the criminal of your wrongdoing,  
 Defender of your crime, and for me to ignite again  
 A burning fire in Africa, which will devour her again?  
 You want me bloodying my hands  
 In the spilled blood of dead Africans.  
 You want me to battle the adversary in your name,  
 And while carrying away my dearest corpse,  
 Taking away Sophonisbe and through her misfortune,  
 Placing her into the straits of a cruel yoke,  
 To triumphantly drag her with a similar hand.  
 My eternal rest that assisted you,  
 My well-being and my wealth, and as a reward,  
 You rob me of the honor of so many ills that I have suffered,  
 Leaving me only with lamentable regret,  
 For having served so well and seeing me wretched,  
 An outrageous anger in seeing me defeated  
 By those whose power my hand restored,  
 Seeing me enslaved by those when this blade  
 Has removed from the deadly shame of the yoke,



	Ruiné perdu par eux apres que relevez	Ruined, defeated by those after being raised
1200	Par ma vive vertu, on les voit conservez	By my vigorous strength. One sees them kept
	Du joug et du malheur qui tenoyent asservie	Under the yoke and in misery, which held
	A leur cruelle loy leur languissant vie ?	Their languishing life enslaved, through their cruel law.
	Quoy donc, Rome, quoy donc, apres ce saint devoir qui remet	What say you therefore Rome, what say you, after this holy duty which
	en credit ton antique pouvoir,	Restores your ancient power,
1205	Après tant de travaux qui reparent ta honte	After so much travail which amends your shame
	Et font que l'ennemy maintenant tu surmonte[s] <sup>1</sup> ,	And enables you to overcome the enemy now.
	Je seray donc ruiné, et par ta cruauté	I will therefore be ruined, and through your cruelty
	Je verray donc mon bien fierement emporté,	I will therefore see my wellbeing snatched away,
	Mon repos enterré et l'honneur de ma vie	My contentment buried, and the honor in my life thrown
1210	Dans l'ardente fureur de ta cruelle envie ?	In the burning fury of your cruel jealousy?
	Quoy, je le verray donc ? Non, feray, je ne puis ;	What, will I therefore see that? No, I will not—cannot—do that;
	Avant il faut mourir. Auparavant ravis,	I will have to die before that. Previously torn away,
	Mon sang et ma vigueur serviront de trophée	My blood and my strength will serve as a trophy
	A Rome, par mon fer de gloires estoffée ?	To Rome, gloriously engraved by my sword.
1215	Quoy, servir de dépouille et n'en voir reparer	What, to serve as a spoil of war and not seeing restored
	Ce qui se fait par moy en terre reverer,	What I have to be revered on Earth,
	Aller devant ce char, en signe de victoire,	Going before this chariot, as a sign of victory,
	Qui sans moy seroit vef de grandeur et de gloire,	Which without me would be bereft of grandeur and glory,
	Servir à Scipion d'esclave malheureux,	Serving as Scipio's wretched slave,
1220	Moy, qui rends son repos parfaitement heureux ?	Am I, myself, who assures his perfect happiness?
	Non, je n'en feray rien, puisque ces mesmes armes	No, I will not do anything, since my same weapons
	Qui deffirent jadis tant de braves gendarmes,	Which previously killed so many brave men-in-arms,
	Tant de peuples armez pour le bien des Romains,	So many armed people for the good of the Romans,
	Se repressent encor en ces superbes mains,	Are still crushed in these proud hands,
1225	Et que le mesme fer qui a secouru Rome,	And since the same sword which saved Rome,
	Que la mesme valeur qu'invincible on renomme,	Since the same valor which is renowned to be invincible,
	Me demeurent encor dont je puis me vanger	Still reside within me so that I can avenge myself
	Et chasser de ce pays cet ingrat estrangeur.	And chase out this ungrateful foreigner from this country.



Massinisse, il le faut, et que ta main guerriere  
 1230 Ravisse par le fer au cruel adversaire  
 Ce qu'il t'a refusé de loyalle equité,  
 Comme l'ayant conquise et partant merité.  
 Sophonisbe est à moy et pour l'avoir conquise  
 Et pour l'avoir à femme equitablement prise,  
 1235 Avant qu'elle eust Siphax reconnu pour espous  
 Et qu'il se fust armé follement contre nous.  
 Doublement elle est mienne, et sans perdre la vie,  
 Je ne dois endurer qu'elle me soit ravie.  
 Non, je la veux deffendre et par le juste droit  
 1240 Et par le fer cruel qui dans ce point paroist,  
 Par l'acier, par la force et plustost que sa perte,  
 Endurer que ma vie en douleur soit deffaite.  
 Sus, je la veux deffendre, et ceste mesme main qui  
 Deffendit l'honneur de l'empire Romain,  
 1245 Qui combatit pour luy et d'un fer salutaire  
 Le retira du joug du cruel adversaire  
 Veut ores le combatre et d'un contraire effort  
 Repousser la fureur qui conjure sa mort.  
 Tu peux ce jour combatre, ô vaillant Massinisse,  
 1250 Le Romain ennemy avec plus de justice  
 Plus de droit, et de loy, qu'autrefois tu ne fis  
 Les Affriquains armez que brave tu deffis,  
 Puisque Rome t'assaut et ravist en sa rage  
 Ce que le sort laissa pour prix à ton courage,  
 1255 Pour loyer à ton fer, pour gloire à ta vertu  
 Qui pour ce bien avoit l'ennemy combatu.  
 Or sus donc, Massinisse, indomtable aux alarmes.  
 Contre les fiers Romains tourne tes justes armes ;

Massinissa, it is necessary, and it is necessary for your warrior-hand  
 To rob the cruel adversary with his sword  
 What he denied you through legal justice,  
 As having conquered and therefore deserved it.  
 Sophonisba is mine, and in order to have vanquished her,  
 And in order to have justly taken her,  
 Before she had recognized Syphax as her husband  
 And before he had foolishly armed himself against us.  
 She is doubly mine, and without losing my life,  
 I must not endure her to be taken from me.  
 No, I want to defend her both by this just right  
 And by the cruel sword which appears in this fist,  
 By steel, by the force and rather than losing her,  
 To endure my life to be in pain defeated.  
 Arise, I want to defend her, and this same hand which  
 Defended the honor of the Roman Empire,  
 Which battled for it and with a steadfast sword  
 Pressured it from the yoke of our cruel adversary  
 This same hand now wishes to fight it with an opposing force  
 To incite the fury which conspires to bring about its destruction.  
 You can fight today, oh valiant Massinissa  
 The Roman enemy with greater justice,  
 Greater righteousness, stronger laws you previously did not do with  
 The brave, armed Africans whom you bravely defeated  
 Since Rome assaults and snatches from you in its fury  
 What destiny left as a prize for your courage,  
 In praise of your sword, in glory for your strength  
 Which had battled the enemy for this good.  
 Now, therefore, arise Massinissa, indomitable when called to fight.  
 Direct your righteous arms against the proud Romans;



1260 Aiguise ton acier contre leur cruel sain  
 Qui cherche à devorer ton repos plus humain.  
 Sus, deffens ton repos et d'une brusque audace  
 Qui se ressent encor de l'honneur de ta race,  
 Ta femme, et ta patrie et ne souffre plus fort  
 Qu'un barbare estranger leur apporte la mort.  
 1265 Deffens-la et combats d'un vigoureux courage  
 Ceux qui veulent leur faire insolemment outrage.  
 Arme-toy contre Rome, et fais que ta valeur  
 Defface ce qu'elle a conservé du malheur.  
 Il le faut, il le faut. Qu'on m'apporte mes armes.  
 1270 Sus, que l'on face armes ces invaincus gendarmes  
 Qui ont cent mille fois l'ennemy combatu,  
 Marchans dessous l'appuy de ma masle vertu.  
 Sus donc, vengeons le tort et la cruelle injure  
 Que Rome insolemment aujourd'huy nous procure.  
 1270 Sus, marchons au combat, endossant le harnois ;  
 Deffendons nos foyers, nos femmes, et nos loix.

#### MISIPSA

Où courrez-vous ainsi ? Quelle esclatante rage  
 Fait esclater l'ardeur de vostre fier courage ?  
 Quelle fureur vous suit ? Quel dessain furieux  
 1280 Fait flamboyer si fort la fureur dans vos yeux ?  
 Quel courroux vous assaut ? Quelle nouvelle envie  
 Traverse de rechef le bien de vostre vie ?  
 Où courez-vous ainsi, semblable aux forcenez  
 Ou à ceux que la peur a cruelle estonnez  
 1285 Qui fuyent du combat et laissent pour mémoire  
 De leur lasche forfait leur plus antique gloire ?  
 Quoy, que voulez-vous faire, et quel nouveau malheur

Sharpen your blade against their cruel vigor  
 Which seeks to devour your more human composure.  
 Arise, defend your peace and with sudden boldness  
 Which still desires revenge for your kin,  
 Your wife, and your country, and which does not strongly abide  
 A barbarian foreigner bringing death on them.  
 Defend them and fight with vigorous courage  
 Those who want to hurt them violently.  
 Arm yourself against Rome and be sure that your valor  
 Defeats those that Rome has kept from misfortune.  
 It is necessary to do so, it is necessary to do so. Bring me my weapons.  
 Arise, bear arms against these undefeated soldiers,  
 Who have fought the enemy one hundred thousand times,  
 Marching under the stead of my manly strength.  
 Therefore arise, let us avenge the wrongs and cruel outrage  
 That Rome arrogantly attains for us today.  
 Arise, let us march into battle, donning our harness;  
 Let us defend our homes, our wives, and our laws.

#### MISIPSA

Where will you therefore run? What burning rage  
 Incites the ardor of your proud courage?  
 What fury follows you? What furious plan  
 Flames so furiously the fury in your eyes?  
 What wrath assaults you? What new jealousy  
 Opposes the wellbeing of your life again?  
 Where will you thus run, like the fanatics  
 Or like those who have been cruelly stricken with fear,  
 Who flee from combat and leave as their memory  
 Their most ancient glory of their cowardly crime.  
 What, what do you wish to do, and what new misfortune



En sa rage vous rend forcené de sa fureur ?  
 « Sire, que faites-vous ? C'est rendre tesmoignage  
 1290 « D'un ame sans valeur et d'un foible courage  
 « Que changer de nature de d'ame et de vertu  
 « A la moindre douleur dont on est combatu.  
 « C'est la fait d'un soldat de la troupe vulgaire ;  
 « C'est la bouillant ardeur d'un cruel populaire  
 1295 « Que changer promptement et de geste et de voix,  
 « Non d'un prince qui est autheur des saintes loix.  
 « Les rois nais pour regir les peuples de la terre  
 « Doyvent estre prudens et en paix et en guerre,  
 « Servir d'exemple saint à leurs sujets qui n'ont  
 1300 « Une vertu si ample empreinte sur le front,  
 « Les passer en sçavoir, ainsi que leur puissance  
 « En celeste grandeur amplement les devance.  
 « La cruelle fureur qui trouble quelquefois  
 « Le repos d'un estat est deffendue aux rois,  
 1305 « Pour avoir le pouvoir en leur ardante rage  
 « D'abismer le public dans un cruel naufrage.  
 « On leur ordonne aussi un conseil qui parfait  
 « Retient de leur fureur le dommageable effet.  
 « Ce conseil les conduist, mais quoy, ils doyvent estre  
 1310 « Peres de ce conseil et plus sages paroistre,  
 « Puisque l'estat d'un prince est de donner la loy,  
 « Non de la recevoir comme impuissant de soy.  
 Et quoy donc, le courroux dont l'ardent furie  
 Vostre divin esprit fierement injurie  
 1315 Transira cet honneur qui vous fist renommer  
 Avant que ceste ardeur eust peu vous animer ?  
 Faut donc perdre le los que vostre main guerriere

In its rage makes you zealous through its fury?  
 "Sir, what are you doing? This renders me a witness  
 Of a soul without worth and with weak courage  
 Rather than one changing he nature both of body and soul  
 To a lesser pain with which one struggles.  
 It's the reality of a soldier in a people's army;  
 It's the burning passion of a cruel people  
 Rather than of that changing rapidly, both in words and action,  
 Not that of a prince who is author of holy laws.  
 Kings born to rule people of the earth  
 Must be wise both in peace and war,  
 To serve as a holy example to their subjects who do not have  
 A virtue so amply furrowed on their brows,  
 To convey to them in knowledge, as their power in heavenly grandeur  
 Goes greatly beyond them.  
 The cruel fury which sometimes troubles  
 The peace of a state is forbidden to kings,  
 In order to have the power in their burning madness  
 Plunging the public into a cruel shipwreck.  
 One prescribes advice to them as well which perfectly  
 Restricts the damaging effect of their fury.  
 This advice drives them, but what, they must be  
 Fathers of this counsel, and appear more wise,  
 Since the place of the prince is to enact the law,  
 Not to respond to it as if he were powerless."  
 And what therefore, the wrath whose burning fury  
 Proudly abuses your divine spirit,  
 Will pierce through this honor which has brought you fame  
 Before this burning had scarcely stirred within you?  
 Is it therefore necessary to lose the praise that your warring hand



Vous conquist aux despens du los de l'adversaire,  
 Et ceste vive gloire, acquise en combatant,  
 1320 Par l'ardeur de ce mal qui vous va surmontant,  
 Faisant comme un grand feu qui vivement enflame  
 Un bois verd eschapé à la petite flamme,  
 Qui contre son ardeur et son humidité  
 Avoit sans s'enflammer longuement resisté ?  
 1325 Aussi ces ragés d'ames horribles, furieuses,  
 Feront mourir à coup vos victoires fameuses,  
 Vos gloires, vos honneurs eschapez au destin  
 Trop foible pour causer leur deplorable fin ?  
 Quoy donc, faut devenir de vanceur indomtable  
 1330 Furieux insensé et partant miserable ?  
 Car jamais la fureur ne marche sans la mort,  
 Et sa rage nous fait changer d'ame et de sort.  
 Quoy, sire, qui a-t-il ? Qui traverse insensee  
 Au heurt de la fureur vostre ardent pensee ?  
 1335 Hé, qu'est-il survenu qui vous anime ainsi  
 De mortelle fureur et de cruel souci,  
 Qui vous fait soupirer et courir de la sorte  
 Qu'il semble que la rage hors de vous vous transporte ?  
 Contez-nous vostre mal ; s'il se peut secourir  
 1340 Par le divin conseil, nous pourrons le guarir.  
 « Et l'esprit agité de fureur se console  
 « Au bal industr[i]eux d'une sage parole.  
 « Le conseil guarist l'ame ainsi que les liqueurs  
 « Vont guarissant des corps les cruelles douleurs,  
 1345 Car c'est son medecin, et le salut de l'ame  
 Est le divin conseil dont la douceur le pasme.  
 Contez-nous donc ce mal qui vous rend furieux.

Overcame you at the cost of your adversary's praise,  
 And this enduring glory, acquired from fighting,  
 By the ardor derived from this evil that is going to overcome you,  
 Like an inferno which quickly engulfs  
 A green wood that has escaped a small fire,  
 Which against its burning and its wetness  
 Had defied being kindled for a long time?  
 Also, will these passions within these souls, dreadful and furious,  
 Suddenly put your famous victories to death,  
 Your glories, your honors that have escaped destiny,  
 Too weak to bring about their lamentable end?  
 What therefore, is it necessary to become an invincible conquerer,  
 Mad, enraged, and therefore wretched?  
 For madness never advances without death,  
 And its rage causes both our souls and our fates to change.  
 What, sir, who is it? Who, incensed, is piercing  
 Your burning thought, clashing with your madness?  
 Hey, what came about to incite you thus  
 From this mortal fury and cruel care,  
 Which makes you sigh and run in such a way  
 That it seems madness possesses your very self?  
 Tell us what troubles you; if it can be helped  
 Through divine counsel, we can heal it.  
 And the mind deranged by madness is soothed  
 "At the ready revelry of a wise word.  
 Advice heals the soul as liqueurs  
 Will heal the body from cruel afflictions,"  
 For it is its physician, and the soul's health  
 Is the divine counsel whose madness assuages it.  
 Tell us therefore of this evil that makes you mad.



MASSINISSE

L'ardeur de guerroyer les Romains orgueilleux.

GELOSSES

O genereuse ardeur, ô vigoureux courage

1350 Qui peut heureusement nous ravir au servage,  
 Nous oster au malheur, et reparer le sort  
 De nostre antique honneur qui languist demy-mort.  
 O genereux desir, entreprise loüable,  
 Puisqu'elle peut changer nostre estat miserable.

1355 Faisons, faisons la guerre, et qu'un foible repos  
 N'amolisse le cours de nostre antique los.  
 Ne restons plus oiseux, voyans nos grasses plaines  
 Couvertes de harnois et luisantes d'enseignes,  
 Semees de soldats et de ce peuple fier

1360 Qui superbe nous vient au combat desfier,  
 Qui vient pour moissonner nostre antique franchise,  
 Et souler de nos biens sa fiere convoitise.  
 Quoy donc, le verrons-nous nos vertus mespriser,  
 Et de nostre secours, outrageux, abuser,

1365 Se servir de nos bras au pourchas de sa gloire,  
 Conquerir p[a]r nos fers mainte riche victoire,  
 Se faire grand par nous, invaincu, redouté,  
 Pour nous ravir apres la douce liberté,  
 Pour forcer nos desirs et d'une audace brave

1370 Tenir nostre vouloir à son vouloir esclave,  
 Ravissans nos enfans, nos femmes, et nos dieux,  
 Afin d'en triompher comme victorieux ?  
 « Non, ne le souffrons point ; l'exercice ordinaire

« D'un prince genereux dont la dextre guerriere  
 1375 « Se fait jour au travers du temps et du destin

MASSINISSA

The burning to wage war against the brazen Romans.

GELOSSES

Oh noble ardor, oh vigorous courage,

Which can fortunately snatch us from enslavement,  
 Which can free us from misfortune, and rebuild the destiny  
 Of our ancient honor which languishes half-dead.  
 Oh noble desire, praiseworthy undertaking,  
 Since it can change our miserable condition.

Let us, let us wage war, and may a weak truce  
 Not abate the tradition of our ancient glory.  
 Let us no longer remain idle, seeing our fruitful fields  
 Covered with harnesses and shining with banners,  
 Sown with soldiers and with those proud people

Who arrogantly come to defy us in battle,  
 Who come to reap from us our ancient freedom,  
 And to indulge their insatiable greed with our wealth.  
 What therefore, will we see them scorning our virtues  
 And outrageously abusing our help,

Using our arms in pursuit of their glory,  
 Conquering many rich victories through our arms,  
 Becoming great, invincible, dreaded  
 Through us, in order to rob from us our sweet liberty,  
 In order to force our desire and with brave boldness,

To keep our will enslaved to their will,  
 Raping our children, our wives, and our gods,  
 In order to triumph as victors?

"No, let us not suffer; the customary practice  
 Of a noble prince whose warring right hand  
 Emerges through time and destiny



« Est de faire la guerre et combattre sans fin.  
 C'est des enfans de Mars la plus celebre gloire,  
 Qui veulent par le fer assurer leur mémoire,  
 Eterniser leur nom, et le porter autour  
 1380 Des lieux où se respand la lumiere du jour.  
 C'est par le fer qu'il faut victorieux paroistre,  
 Puisque le fer tout seul invaincus nous fait estre.  
 Hannibal nous l'apprend qu'on redoute, qu'on craint  
 Pour avoir par le fer, le fer cruel contraint.  
 1385 Suyvons-le en ce devoir ; il n'est si foible guerre  
 Qui n'acquiere du los, de l'heur, ou de la terre,  
 Car nul ne l'entreprend qu'il ne soit renommé  
 Comme portant un cœur de courage animé.  
 Qui fist perdre l'estat au mol Sardanapalle  
 1390 Que le sejour oiseux dans une infame salle  
 Et le deffaut d'aller genereux aux combats  
 Pour foible apprehender la rigueur du trespas ?  
 Non, non, Rome ne peut nous reduire en servage,  
 Si de luy resister nous avons le courage.  
 1395 Elle ne peut nous vaincre et forcer indomtez,  
 Si nous voulons armer contre ses cruautez.  
 Elle semble à la pluye, encore que petite,  
 Qui outrepatte tout quand rien ne luy resiste,  
 Mais qui ne passe pas les sommets des chasteaux,  
 1400 Pour resister couverts au rouler de ses eaux.  
 Rome fait de la sorte, et Rome se fait dame  
 De ceux qui ont la peur fremissante dans l'ame,  
 Qui ne resistent pas et qui faute de cœur  
 Se laissent emporter au fremissant malheur.  
 1405 Or n'en faisons ainsi, et que Rome insensee,

Is to wage war and to fight unrelentingly."  
 It is the most celebrated glory of the children of Mars,  
 Who want to assure their memory by the sword,  
 To immortalize their name, and to bear it every place  
 Where the light of day touches.  
 It is by the sword that they must appear victorious,  
 Since the sword by itself makes us unconquerable.  
 Hannibal teaches us to dread, to fear  
 To wield the sword, the cruel sword.  
 Let us follow him in performing this duty; it is not so petty a war  
 That may acquire fortune or land,  
 For no one attempts it who may not be acclaimed  
 For bearing a heart inspired by courage.  
 What caused the state to lose to wanton Sardanapalus<sup>2</sup>,  
 By remaining idly in an infamous room  
 And by not nobly going into battle  
 In order to recognize cowardly the severity of death?  
 No, no, Rome cannot reduce us to slaves,  
 If we have the courage to resist them.  
 They cannot conquer us or force us, unbroken,  
 If we want to arm ourselves against their cruelty.  
 Rome seems like the rain, yet weaker,  
 Which exceeds everything when nothing resists it,  
 But which does not go beyond the castles' turrets,  
 In order to overcome waters churning in the land.  
 Rome does these sorts of things, and Rome becomes the lady  
 Of those who have trembling fear in their hearts,  
 Who do not resist, and who, through lack of heart,  
 Allow themselves to be carried away into quaking misfortune.  
 Now, let us not do this, and may incensed Rome



De qui nostre creance est cent fois abusee,  
 Qui se mocque de nous, qui nous veut asservir,  
 Et nostre honneur conquis d'entre nos mains ravir,  
 Cognoisse à son malheur que nous avons puissance

1410 De luy faire du mal, comme l'assistance  
 De luy faire la guerre ainsi que nostre main  
 L'a faite à l'ennemy de ce peuple Romain.  
 Chassons ces estrangers, et que nostre patrie  
 Soit exempte ce jour de leur vive furie.

1415 Reconnoissons nos loix, nostre pays, nos citez,  
 Et deffendons encor nos cheres libertez,  
 Nos temples, nos palais, et de nos premiers peres,  
 Trespassez pour le pays, les tombes mortuaires.  
 Imitons Hannibal ; comme luy combatons

1420 Ceux que pour ennemis cruels nous redoutons.  
 « Or sus, faisons ainsi ; l'on n'a point de louange  
 « D'aider contre les siens une nation estrange,  
 Un barbare estranger qui cruel et mutin,  
 Et sucçant nostre sang, vit de nostre butin.

1425 Je le veux, il le faut ; au salut de Cartage  
 Renoüons de rechef nostre guerrier courage.  
 Pour elle combattons ; faisons que les Romains  
 Cognoissent par effet que nos guerrieres mains,  
 Ayans fait de ce pays don à leur republique,

1430 Le peuvent retirer et le rendre à l'Affrique.  
 Qui a vaincu Siphax que ce fer indomté ?  
 Qui a conquis sa terre et mis en liberté ?  
 Tant d'esclaves Romains, qui les fait redoutables  
 Que ce fer que je branle en ces mains indomtables ?

1435 Et qu'eust fait Scipion parmy tant d'ennemis,

Which, having abused our trust a hundred times,  
 Which mocks us, which wants to enslave us,  
 And to snatch out from between our hands our defeated honor,  
 Know to its misfortune that we have the power  
 To inflict pain on her, which goes in hand with  
 Going to war, just as our hand  
 Did to Rome's enemies.  
 Let us chase out these foreigners, and may our country  
 Be rid of their impassioned fury today.

Let us respect our laws, our country, our cities,  
 And still, let us defend our dear liberty,  
 Our temples, our palaces, the funeral tombs  
 Of our forefathers who died for our country.  
 Let us imitate Hannibal; like him, let us battle  
 Those cruel enemies we dread.

"Now arise, let us thus do so; one does not have enough praise  
 To aid a foreign country against its own people,"  
 A foreign barbarian who is cruel and seditious,  
 And sucking out our blood, lives off our spoils.

I want it, and it is necessary; for the salvation of Carthage  
 Let us join again our war-like courage.  
 For Carthage, let us fight. Let us make the Romans  
 Know, indeed, that warring hands,  
 Having made this country a gift to their republic,  
 Can surrender it and yield it to Africa.

Who conquered Syphax, if not this indomitable sword?  
 Who conquered and liberated his lands?  
 So many Roman slaves, who make them dread  
 This sword that I brandish in these invincible hands?  
 And what would Scipio have done among so many enemies,



S'il n'eust eu nos soldats pour asseurez amis ?  
 Qui l'a sauvé que nous et qui fait que la gloire  
 Immortelle s'atache à sa riche victoire ?  
 Qui vainquit Asdrubal et Mago et tous ceux  
 1440 Que contre luy l'Affrique animoit furieux ?  
 Qui a vaincu que nous, et pendant il faut rendre  
 Ce que pour seul butin nous avons daigné prendre !  
 Faut rendre Sophonisbe, afin, ô cruauté,  
 Qu'on triomphe à plein gré de sa rare beauté !  
 1445 Non il n'en sera rien ; sus, qu'on prenne les armes,  
 Qu'on suyve vostre chef, ô courageux gendarmes,  
 Car avant que souffrir cet acte injurieux,  
 On me verra combattre et la terre et les cieux.  
 Non, je mourray plustost ! Plustost, plustost sans ame  
 1450 Massinisse sera donc sans sa chere femme !  
 C'est trop fouller les rois que vouloir abuser  
 De leur sacré pouvoir et leur nom mespriser.  
 C'est trop se moquer d'eux que brider leur puissance  
 Au gré d'un peuple, fol ministre d'ignorance.  
 1455 C'est trop rire de nous et trop peu faire cas  
 De ceux qui ont sauvé les Romains du trespas.  
 Or il faut se resoudre et d'une brave audace  
 Chasser ce deshonneur qui rougist nostre face.  
 Il le faut, je le veux ; Massinisse mourra  
 1460 Ou royne de ce pays Sophonisbe sera.  
 C'est mon affection, mon vouloir, mon envie  
 « Qui ne finira point qu'en la fin de ma vie.  
 « Me suivre qui voudra ; le trespas est plus doux  
 « Que le vivre cruel qui trespasse à tous coups.

MISIPSA

If he had not had our soldiers as steadfast friends?  
 Who saved him if not us, and who makes our eternal glory  
 Be identified with his rich victory?  
 Who conquered Asdrubal, Mago, and all those  
 That incited Africa to wage war against him with fury.  
 Who has conquered, if not us, and while it is necessary to return  
 This sole treasure that we deign to take!  
 It is necessary to return Sophonisba, oh cruelty, in order to  
 Triumph willingly over her rare beauty!  
 No, there will be nothing to this; arise, take up arms,  
 Follow your leader, courageous soldiers,  
 For, before suffering this destructive act,  
 One will see me fighting both the heavens and Earth,  
 I will rather die! Rather, rather without a soul  
 Massinissa will therefore be without his dear wife!  
 It is too much to mistreat kings than to want to abuse them  
 With their sacred power and to dishonor their name.  
 It is too much to mock them than to rein in their power  
 At the will of a people, which is a mad minister of ignorance.  
 It's too ridiculous of us and too little of us to attach importance  
 To those who have saved the Romans from death.  
 Now, we must be resolute and with courageous boldness  
 Rid ourselves of this dishonor that embarrasses us.  
 It is necessary, I want it; Massinissa will die  
 Or Sophonisba will be queen of this country.  
 It is my wish, my will, my desire  
 "Which will end only at the moment of my death.  
 Whoever wishes to follow me, death is sweeter  
 Than a cruel life that kills with every blow."

MISIPSA



1465 Sire, attendez un peu ; reffrenez la colere  
 Qui vous rend inhumain, de vous-mesme adversaire.  
 Adoucissez cet[te] ire, et songez au malheur  
 Qui s'engendre souvent de l'ardante fureur.  
 « Celuy n'est point heureux qui n'est pas assez sage  
 1470 « Pour presager le cours de son proche dommage,  
 « Qui se laisse emporter à son desir ardent,  
 « Et son futur meschef au presage prudent.  
 « Il faut non seulement estre prudent à l'heure  
 « Que le sacré bonheur avecque nous demeure,  
 1475 « Mais alors que le mal vient pour nous tourmenter,  
 « Mesme avant qu'il arrive, afin de l'eviter.  
 L'aveugle qui n'a point cheminant de conduite,  
 Et qui pense un malheur eviter à la suite,  
 En rencontre un plus grand venant à trebucher  
 1480 Dans un antre profond ou du haut d'un rocher.  
 Bridez vostre fureur et chassez de vostre ame  
 Ce colere inhumain qui fierement l'enflame.  
 « Avant que de vouloir s'opposer au destin,  
 « Il faut penser prudens quelle sera la fin  
 1485 « De l'ouvrage entrepris et se garder de faire  
 « Chose qui puisse apres de regret nous deffaire,  
 Car on ne peut estaindre un feu partout espars  
 Qui se va respandant cruel de toutes pars,  
 Qui consomme, qui brule en sa fureur ardante  
 1490 Tout ce qui se presente à sa rage brulante.  
 De mesme l'on ne peut un grand malheur briser  
 Qu'avant qu'il fut venu l'on pouvoit apaiser,  
 Et alors qu'on le sent, on sent la repentance  
 De n'avoir de bonne heure esteint sa violence.

Sir, wait a bit; hold back your fury  
 That makes you inhuman, your very own enemy.  
 Calm this wrath, and consider the misfortune  
 Which often brings about some burning fury.  
 "He is not happy who is not sufficiently wise  
 To foresee the coming of his imminent destruction,  
 Who lets himself be carried away by burning desire,  
 And his future misfortune by this solemn omen.  
 It is not only necessary to be prudent at this time,  
 When sacred happiness remains with us,  
 But when evil comes to torment us,  
 In order to avoid it even before it arrives."  
 The blind man who never walks ahead,  
 And who intends to avoid misfortune as a result,  
 Meets a greater misfortune coming from stumbling  
 Into a deep cave or from the top of a rock.  
 Bridle your fury and chase from your soul  
 This inhuman anger which proudly enflames it.  
 "Before wanting to challenge your destiny  
 One must think wisely about the end  
 Of this task that you are undertaking and of guarding yourself against  
 Something that, afterwards, can regrettably ruin us."  
 For one cannot extinguish a fire scattered everywhere  
 Which is savagely spreading in every direction,  
 Which consumes, which scorches in its burning fury  
 Everything that is placed before its burning rage.  
 Similarly, one cannot shatter this great misfortune  
 Which one could appease before it happened.  
 And while one so feels it, one feels the repentance  
 For not having extinguished Rome's violence early.



1495 Gardez-vous de ce mal et de douleur atteint,  
 De dire, j'ay failli ; ne vous voyez contraint,  
 « Car double nous sentons la douleur inhumaine,  
 « L'une de nostre erreur, l'autre de nostre paine,  
 « Et plus que la douleur souvent le repentir  
 1500 « Nous fait cruellement la peine ressentir,  
 « Puisque chacun a honte ayant commis offense,  
 « Pour se croire advisé et riche de prudence.  
 Mais, quoy, que pensez-vous faire de vos amis  
 Qui vous ont conservé vos cruels ennemis,  
 1505 Allumer contre vous et le ciel et la terre  
 Et vous perdre en l'ardeur d'une cruelle guerre ?  
 Pourquoi ? Pour seulement contre toute equité  
 Retenir un[e] femme et dont la cruauté,  
 L'ire et l'ambition ont rendu miserable  
 1510 Siphax à qui un jour vous deviendrez semblable,  
 Si comme il fist jadis, vous croyez follement  
 Sophonisbe qui est cause de son tourment.  
 Songez au juste droit que Rome qui dispose  
 Presque de l'univers justement vous propose.  
 1515 Songez à sa justice, et d'un semblable sort  
 Songez pareillement à vostre injuste tort,  
 Puis songez au pouvoir qu'elle a de vous détruire  
 Et de vous enlever et la vie et l'empire,  
 Ainsi comme elle a fait de mille rois domtez  
 1520 Qui s'estoyent comme vous de sa ruine vantez.  
 S'elle a ruiné l'estat de la riche Cartage,  
 Et si toute l'Afrique elle a mis en servage,  
 Subjugué tout ce pays, ne pourra-t-elle pas  
 Par un semblable effort vous trainer au trespas ?

Guard against this evil and pain that has hit us.  
 Of saying I have failed; do not see yourselves constrained,  
 "For we feel doubly the inhuman pain:  
 One of our error, the other of our agony,  
 And the more sorrow often lends us to repent,  
 It causes us to feel the pain cruelly,  
 Since each of us is ashamed for having offended,  
 In order to believe himself to be well-advised and endowed in wisdom."  
 But, what, what do you intend to do with your friends  
 Who have saved you from your cruel enemies,  
 Setting on fire both heaven and earth against you,  
 And losing you in the passion of a cruel war?  
 Why? For only, against the rules of all fairness  
 Keeping a wife and whose cruelty,  
 Wrath, and ambition have made Syphax miserable  
 To whom one day you will become similar,  
 If as he once did, you foolishly believe  
 Sophonisba to be the cause of his torment.  
 Think about the righteous law that Rome ordains  
 Nearly the universe justly proposes to you.  
 Think about Rome's justice, and likewise think about  
 Your unjust offense from a similar fate,  
 Then, think about the power that Rome has to destroy you  
 And to take from you both your life and empire,  
 Therefore, as Rome has vanquished a thousand kings,  
 Who like you had boasted of its ruin.  
 If Rome devastated the state of rich Carthage,  
 And if Rome enslaved all of Africa,  
 Subjugated this entire country, can Rome not  
 By a similar effort drag you to your demise?



1525 Elle pourra le faire et malheureux vous rendre,  
 S'elle veut ce dessein, courageuse, entreprendre,  
 Songez en Scipion, pensez en sa valeur,  
 Et comme il a domté le sort et le malheur,  
 Les hommes et les cieux. Songez en sa justice  
 1530 Et voyez comme juste il corrige le vice.  
 Songez que jusqu'icy il a toujours resté  
 En sa masle valeur aux mortels indomté,  
 Que nul ne l'a sçu vaincre, et qu'il a la puissance  
 De perdre ce qui fait à son fer resistance.  
 1535 Puis songez ce sujet de si foible valeur  
 Pour qui vous desirez encourir ce malheur.  
 Enfin, c'est une femme, une femme ennemie  
 De l'honneur, du repos de vostre heureuse vie  
 Qu'on ne peut refuser, si le sort inhumain  
 1540 La veut assujettir à l'empire Romain,  
 S'il l'a rendue esclave et si la loy cruelle  
 Des injustes combats la fait devenir telle.  
 Or, sire, songez-y, et mettant au trespas  
 La divine equité, ne vous y mettez pas.  
 1545 Ne vous enterrez pas avecque la justice  
 Pour deffendre le faux et soustenir le vice.  
 « Tout malheur qui survient pour n'avoir pas esté  
 « Soigneux de conserver vivante l'equité  
 « Nous destruit doublement ; il nous oste la vie,  
 1550 « Et pour avoir erré nostre gloire est ravie.  
 Or, sire, pensez-y ; au lieu de secourir  
 Vostre divin honneur, ne [l]e faites mourir.

MASSINISSE

Mais quoy, n'ay-je promis à ceste pauvre roïne

Rome can do that and render you miserable,  
 If Rome courageously wants to carry out this design,  
 Think of Scipio, think of his valor,  
 And as he overcame fate and misfortune,  
 Men and the heavens. Think of his justice  
 And see how justly he corrects corruption.  
 Think that so far he has always remained  
 In his manly valor unconquered by mortal means,  
 That nobody knew how to defeat him, and that he has the power  
 To defeat what defies his sword.  
 Then think about the subject of such weak valor  
 For whom you desire to incur this misfortune.  
 Finally, it is a woman, a female enemy  
 Of honor, of peace, of your happy life  
 Whom one cannot refuse, if inhuman fate  
 Wants to subject her to the Roman empire,  
 If he enslaved her, and if cruel law,  
 Of unjust battles makes her become such.  
 Now, sir, think of it, and putting to death  
 Divine justice, do not place yourself in that situation.  
 Do not bury yourself with justice  
 To defend the untrue and to sustain vice.  
 "Every misfortune which takes place for not being  
 Careful in preserving its living freedom  
 Doubly destroys us; it takes away our lives,  
 And for having erred our glory is ripped away."  
 Now, sir, think about it; instead of supporting  
 Your divine honor, do not have it destroyed.

MASSINISSA

But what, did I not promise this poor queen



De ne souffrir jamais qu'en servage on la traine ?

1555 « Elle en a ma promesse, et qui n'a point de foy,  
« N'a point de qualité qui le face estre roy.

MISIPSA

« La foy perd ce beau nom, dont l'effet dommageable

« Fait paroistre un public à jamais miserable,

« Et l'on ne doit garder la promesse qui fait

1560 « Un estat miserable et son cruel effait.

GELOSSES

« Plus chere que nos biens nostre foy nous doit estre,

« Puisque nul glorieux n'oseroit comparoistre

« Qui a manqué de foy, car il n'est plus de ceux

« Qui vivent en honneur pour estre vertueux.

MISIPSA

1565 « Une petite foy qui brise la publique,

« Une promesse neuve empeschant une antique

« Ne sont foy ny serment, puisqu'elles font perir

« Celles que nous devons pour divines cherir.

MASSINISSE

« La promesse qu'on fait au pauvre miserable

1570 « Doit comme nostre vie estre tousjours tenable,

« Car il vient à secours en sa paine vers nous,

« Et la faussant, des dieux on esmeut le courroux.

MISIPSA

« Les dieux ne sont marris de voir mal caresse

« Une promesse injuste et qui peut insensee

1575 « Perdre tout un public, car la foy seulement

« Se garde pour garder un public de tourment.

GELOSSES

« Qu'est-il de plus cruel que de rendre deceüe,

Never to suffer anyone who being dragged her into servitude?

"She has my promise, and whoever does not keep his word,  
Has no capacity to be king."

MISIPSA

"Loyalty loses this good name, whose damaging effect

Makes the public seem to be forever miserable,

And one must not keep the promise which makes

A state miserable and its consequences cruel."

GELOSSES

"More dear to us must be our word than our wealth,

Since no one who has lacked faith would dare to appear

To rise to glory, in order to be virtuous,

There is nothing else for those who lead honorable lives.

MISIPSA

"Little faith breaks apart the commonwealth,

And a new promise hindering an ancient one

Are neither taken in pledge nor on oath, since they bring about the death

Of those whom we must cherish as holy."

MASSINISSE

"The promise that one makes to the miserable wretched one

Must always be held fast like our lives,

For it comes to our rescue in its pain,

And falsifying it, one stirs the wrath of the gods."

MISIPSA

"The gods are not distressed to see a cherished evil,

An unjust promise and which, arising furiously, can

Forsake an entire people, for only faith

Is kept in order to guard a people from torment."

GELOSSES

"What is more cruel than being deceived,



« E[n] faussant nostre foy, l'ame qui l'a receüe ?  
« Qu'est-il de plus injuste ? O qu'il vaut beaucoup mieux  
1580 « Perir que d'estre veu injuste sous les cieux !

MISIPSA

« Celuy que le sort rend esclave miserable  
« De recevoir la foy ne peut estre capable,  
« Puisqu'il est asservi, et n'ayant ce pouvoir,  
« Il ne peut nous contraindre à ce juste devoir.

MASSINISSE

1585 A qui la doit-l'on donc conserver asseuree ?

MISIPSA

A ceux qui l'ont de nous en promesse tiree.

GELOSSES

Et qui sont ceux qui ont ce pouvoir si puissant ?

MISIPSA

Ceux qui justes de nous le courent pourchassant.

MASSINISSE

A qui est-il plus deu qu'au chetif miserable ?

GELOSSES

1590 A celui qui nous a conservez secourable.

MASSINISSE

Abandonner ceux-là qui loyaux se sont mis  
En nos mains pour fuir le fer des ennemis,  
O quelle cruaute !

GELOSSES

Esmouvoir une guerre

En deffendant le faux pour perdre nostre terre,

1595 O miserable erreur !

MASSINISSE

Vaut mieux pauvre se voir

In falsifying our word, the soul which has held it?  
What is more unjust? Oh it would be much better  
To die than to be seen as unjust under the heavens!"

MISIPSA

"He whom destiny renders a miserable slave  
Cannot be capable of receiving and holding faith,  
Since he is enslaved, and not having this power,  
He cannot force us to undertake this rightful duty."

MASSINISSA

To whom must one therefore keep it secure?

MISIPSA

Those who have extracted from us our promise.

GELOSSES

And who are those who have such forceful power?

MISIPSA

Those of us who justly run to pursue it.

MASSINISSA

To whom is it more rightful than to a miserable wretch?

GELOSSES

He who has kept us safe.

MASSINISSA

Abandoning those, who, loyally, have entrusted themselves  
To our hands in order to escape the enemy's swords,  
Oh what cruelty!

GELOSSES

Inciting a war

In defending falsehood in order to lose our land,

Oh wretched fault!

MASSINISSA

It would be better to be seen as poor



Que malheureux sujet d'un contraire pouvoir.

MISIPSA

Ce n'est estre sujet que faire la justice.

GELOSSES

C'est l'estre que n'avoir point de libre exercice.

MISIPSA

Et qu'est-il de besoin d'exercicer le forfait ?

MASSINISSE

1600 Celuy n'a son pouvoir entierement parfait,

Qui le bien et le mal à son plaisir n'exerce.

MISIPSA

Ce pouvoir outrageux nostre gloire traverse.

GELOSSES

Ce pouvoir accompli pour puissans nous fait voir.

MISIPSA

Vaut mieux estre sans luy que sans juste devoir

1605 Vers la sainte equité, et l'injustice puissance

Apporte de pecher la cruelle licence.

MASSINISSE

Mais celuy ne se peut assurer d'estre roy

Qui rend ses faits sujets d'une estrangere loy.

MISIPSA

Celuy regne en repos à repos à qui la juste crainte

1610 Fait suyvre la vertu et la justice sainte.

GELOSSES

Celuy ne regne pas dont le vueil est forcé.

MISIPSA

Celuy domine heureux qui n'est point traversé.

MASSINISSE

Qui nous traverse plus que le joug implacable ?

Than to be an unfortunate subject of an opposing power.

MISIPSA

There is only one issue: justice.

GELOSSES

That means not having freedom.

MISIPSA

And is there a need to commit crime?

MASSINISSE

He who does not engage in good and evil willingly

Does not have power to be entirely perfect.

MISIPSA

This outrageous power pierces our glory.

GELOSSES

This power that has been realized shows us to be strong.

MISIPSA

It is better to be without it than to have a righteous duty

For holy fairness, and the power of injustice

Brings about the cruel freedom to commit sin.

MASSINISSE

But he cannot assure himself of being king,

Which makes his deeds subject to a foreign law.

MISIPSA

He to whom just fear creates virtue and holy justice

Reigns always in moments in peace.

GELOSSES

He whose will is forced does not reign.

MISIPSA

He who is not opposed rules happily.

MASSINISSE

Who opposes us more than the implacable yoke?



MISIPSA

Le crime que l'on fait qui nous rend miserable.

GELOSSES

1615 Faut donc que les Romains corrigent nos forfaits.

MISIPSA

Il le faut, s'ils sont plus que nous autres parfaits.

MASSINISSE

C'est pour leur obeir à nous-mesme[s] desplaire.

MISIPSA

Si nous l'avons promis, il y faut satisfaire.

GELOSSES

Une promesse infame est tousjours en horreur.

MISIPSA

1620 Le serment est heureux qui nous tire d'erreur.

MASSINISSE

Mais ce mesme serment qu'on garde outre mesure,

En le gardant me fait vers un autre injure.

MISIPSA

Ce n'est parjurer, manquant à son devoir,

Lorsque d'estre fidelle on n'a pas le pouvoir.

1625 Le serment impossible est tousjours revocable.

GELOSSES

Non est, s'il peut sauver un pauvre miserable.

MISIPSA

Mais si pour le sauver le public court ce mal ?

MASSINISSE

Vaut mieux courir ce sort que se voir desloyal.

MISIPSA

Rien ne doit estre cher comme la republique.

GELOSSES

MISIPSA

Le crime that one does which makes us miserable.

GELOSSES

Therefore it is necessary for the Romans to correct our crimes.

MISIPSA

It is necessary, if they are more perfect than us.

MASSINISSE

In disobeying them, we displease ourselves.

MISIPSA

If we have promised it, it is necessary to satisfy it.

GELOSSES

A vile promise always ends in horror.

MISIPSA

Fortunate is the oath that draws us away from error.

MASSINISSE

But this same oath that one excessively keeps,

And in keeping it, leads me to another offense.

MISIPSA

There is no breaking of oath, in not fulfilling one's duty,

When one does not have the power to be faithful.

The impossible oath can always be broken.

GELOSSES

No it cannot, if it can save a miserable wretch.

MISIPSA

But if, in order to preserve it, the people commit this wrong?

MASSINISSE

It is better to accept this fate than to be seen as disloyal.

MISIPSA

Nothing must be held as precious as the republic.

GELOSSES



1630 Rien ne nous esmeut tant que nostre gloire antique.  
MISIPSA  
On la perd en perdant l'amitié des Romains.  
MASSINISSE  
Pourquoy, si nous pouvons traverser leurs desseins ?  
MISIPSA  
Pour avoir plus que nous d'equitable puissance.  
GELOSSES  
Qu'eussent-ils fait sans nous et sans nostre assistance ?

1635 En ruinant l'ennemy, perdu nostre pouvoir.  
MASSINISSE  
Mais plustost surmontez chacun les eust peu voir.  
MISIPSA  
Non, non, ne croyons pas Rome si miserable  
Que ne pouvoir sans nous se rendre redoutable.  
GELOSSES  
Non, non, ne pensons pas si foible nostre main  
1640 Que ne pouvoir regner sans le peuple Romain.

MISIPSA  
S'il commande partout, faut que nostre puissance  
Pour durer comme luy vienne de sa souffrance.  
MASSINISSE  
Mais s'il nous veut ravir la gloire et le bonheur,  
Devons-nous endurer un si lasche malheur ?

MISIPSA  
1645 De nous rendre ce mal Scipion ne desire,  
Puisque soigneux il a conservé nostre empire.  
GELOSSES  
Mais il veut nous forcer contre nostre desir.

Nothing stirs us as much as our ancient glory.  
MISIPSA  
We are losing it while losing the friendship of the Romans.  
MASSINISSA  
Why, if we can thwart their plans?  
MISIPSA  
To have more than our rightful power.  
GELOSSES  
What would they have done without us and our assistance?

MISIPSA  
While devastating the enemy, our power lost.  
MASSINISSA  
But, instead each could have seen them having triumphed.  
MISIPSA  
No, no, let us not believe Rome so miserable  
As not being able to be dreaded without us.  
GELOSSES  
No, no, let us not think our hand so weak  
As not to be able to reign without the Roman people.

MISIPSA  
If they rule everywhere, our power must like theirs,  
In order to endure, come from suffering.  
MASSINISSA  
But if they want to rip away from us our glory and happiness,  
Must we endure such a cowardly misfortune?

MISIPSA  
Scipio does not want to bring this evil upon us,  
Since he has so carefully kept our empire intact.  
GELOSSES  
But he wants to bend us against our will.



MISIPSA

Non fait, mais nous priver d'un infame plaisir  
Qui nous peut enterrer en sa cendre cruelle.

MASSINISSE

1650 Mais pour luy obeir il faut estre infidelle.

MISIPSA

Non fait, mais ne faisant sa juste volonté  
L'on sera plain d'erreur et d'infidélité.

MASSINISSE

Mais contre mon desir une chose il demande.

MISIPSA

Il le peut, puisque juste est sa sainte demande.

MASSINISSE

1655 Me demander ma femme ?

MISIPSA

Ains plustost l'ennemy

De ton sacré repos, qu'un si fidelle amy  
Comme t'est Scipion, ton amitié ne quite,  
Pour voir que pour autrui son pouvoir tu dépète[s]<sup>3</sup>.  
Sire, songez en luy ; songez en sa vertu

1660 Sous qui victorieux vous avez combatu.

Songez en sa valeur ; songez en sa prudence  
Et en son amitié, si vive en excellence.

Helas, ne la perdez pour plaire à vostre amour  
Dont la vive fureur peut vous détruire un jour.

1665 Ne quittez ce grand chef pour deffendre une femme  
Qui peut, comme Siphax, vous rendre un jour infame,  
Et qu'un plaisir leger ne vous face inhumain  
Perdre l'honneur, la vie, et le secours Romain.

MASSINISSE

MISIPSA

Not true, but to deprive us of a shameful pleasure  
That can bury us in his cruel ashes.

MASSINISSE

But in order to obey him, it is necessary to be disloyal.

MISIPSA

Not true, in not bending to his just will  
One will be entirely wrong and disloyal.

MASSINISSE

But he asks something against my will.

MISIPSA

He can do so because his holy request is right.

MASSINISSE

To ask me for my wife?

MISIPSA

Thus, rather than the enemy

Of your holy peace, such a faithful friend  
As Scipio is to you, does not abandon your friendship  
In order to see that you are begrudging his power for another.

Sir, think about him; think about his virtue  
Under which you have fought victoriously.

Think of his valor; think of his wisdom  
And his friendship, so brilliant in excellence.

Alas, do not lose it to please your love  
Whose impassioned fury can one day destroy you.

Do not abandon this great leader to defend a woman  
Who can, like Syphax, render to you a shameful day.

And may a fleeting inhuman pleasure not cause you inhumanely  
To lose honor, life, and Roman support.

MASSINISSE



Or je veux y penser et faute de prudence  
 1670 A guider mes desirs ne commettre une offence  
 Que perdre mon estat et rendre Scipion  
 Vers moy, son cher amy, changé d'affection.  
 Non, non, il ne faut pas que le desir gourmande  
 Nostre juste devoir ; il ne faut qu'il commande  
 1675 A la sainte raison, ains suyvre seulement  
 Ce qui peut honorer nostre contentement.  
 Mais j'avise Lelie ; il faut que je l'entende  
 Et que selon son veuil response je luy rende.

LELIUS

O roy, fidelle amy du grand peuple Romain,  
 1680 Qui tousjours a senty favorable ta main,  
 Ton fër et ton secours en vangeant de l'Affrique  
 Les outrages commis à nostre republique,  
 Amy de Scipion, dont la sainte valeur  
 A de Rome assoupy le menaçant malheur,  
 1685 Et quoy, ne veux-tu pas conserver vive entiere  
 Avecque les Romains ton amitié premiere ?  
 Ne veux-tu les aimer, recompensant, ce jour  
 Leur fidelle amitié d'un immuable amour  
 Et juste, leur rendant ce que le sort leur laisse  
 1690 Pour loyer meritè de leur vive proüesse,  
 Et ne leur ravissant ce qui leur est promis  
 Par la loy de ravir aux cruels ennemis,  
 Leur rendant leur butin et leurs depouilles cheres,  
 Qui sont prix immuable à leurs lames guerrieres ?  
 1695 Ne refuse ce droit, ô roy, ne veuille pas  
 Armer encontre toy la fureur de leurs bras,  
 Irriter leur courroux et te rendre adversaire

Now I want to think about it, and, for lack of wisdom,  
 About directing my desires, not to commit an offense  
 Than to lose my state and to render Scipio to be  
 Against me, his dear friend, and to have his affection turned away.  
 No, no, it is not necessary for desire to abuse  
 Our just duty; it is not necessary for him to rule  
 With holy reason, rather only to follow  
 What can honor our happiness.  
 But I must consider Lelius; I must hear him  
 And render him a response according to his wishes.

LELIUS

Oh king, faithful friend of the great Roman people,  
 Who have always found your hand to be favorable,  
 Your sword and your help while avenging Africa  
 From the outrages committed against our republic,  
 Friend of Scipio, whose holy valor  
 Has calmed the threatening disaster from Rome,  
 And what, do you not wish to keep alive and whole  
 Your first friendship with the Romans?  
 Do you not want to love them, rewarding, on this day,  
 Their faithful friendship with an unwavering love,  
 And justly, rendering to them what fate leaves them  
 As deserved remuneration for their brilliant valor,  
 And not snatching from them what is promised to them  
 By the law of plundering your cruel enemies,  
 Rendering to them their booty and their dear spoils of war,  
 Which are always the price for their warring blades?  
 Do not refuse this right, oh king, may you not want  
 Armed against you the fury of their weapons,  
 May you not want to incite their wrath and to make you an enemy



Scipion, qui tousjours a voulu te complaire.

Songe à nostre demande, et Sophonisbe rends

1700 Que pour juste butin aujourd'huy je pretens.

MASSINISSE

Lelie, je le veux, et par experience

Vous aurez ce jourd'huy de ma foy cognoissance.

Je veux vous la remettre et vous gardant ma foy,

Paroistre que je suis digne du nom de roy.

LELIUS

1705 Aussi le ciel sera propice à la mémoire

Et celestes rendra les rayons de ta gloire.

CŒUR DES ROMAINS

Si au combat se trouve la justice,

Puisque le fer souvent estaint sa loy,

Il n'en est point d'equitable de soy,

1710 Que celuy-là qui fait mourir le vice.

Il est besoin souvent de la puissance

Pour forcer ceux qui offencent le droit,

Et les grands dieux en leur conseil secret

Au juste fer apportent assistance.

1715 Il ne faut pas que le meschant estime

Commettre mal sans en estre puny,

Car des grands dieux le pouvoir infiny

Grand se fait voir pour corriger le crime.

Ainsi le sent l'Affrique miserable,

1720 Qui n'a jamais honoré l'equité,

Et le malheur qu'elle a bien merité

Fait voir le ciel divin et equitable.

Pourveu qu'enflez de sa fatale ruine

Of Scipio, who has always wanted to please you.

Think about our request and render Sophonisba

Whom I claim today as a rightful prize.

MASSINISSA

Lelius, I want to, and by experience

You will know my faith today.

I want to hand her over to you and, in keeping my faith with you,

Appear to be worthy of the name of king

LELIUS

Also the heavens will be favorable to your memory

And will shine forth heavenly rays on your glory.

THE ROMAN CHORUS

If justice is found in combat,

Since the sword often stamps out its law,

There is nothing just in itself,

Except he who dies because of vice.

He often needs power

To force those who abuse the law,

And the great gods in their secret counsel,

Support the righteous sword.

It is not necessary for the wicked

To respect the committing of evil without being punished,

For the infinite power of the great gods

Unfolds itself to be great in correcting crime.

Thus wretched Africa feels this,

Africa, which has never known justice feels this,

And the misery that it has indeed deserved

Reveals the heavens to be divine and just.

Provided that we, swollen with pride by Africa's ruin,



1725 Nous ne tombions en ses crimes commis,  
Les dieux seront à nostre estat amis,  
Puisque courtoise est leur dextre divine.  
Mais bien souvent le bonheur et la gloire  
Enflent nos cœurs, les font ambitieux  
Tant qu'oublions la grace des grans dieux,  
1730 Ils n'ont aussi de nostre bien mémoire.  
Face le ciel que ce malheur n'arrive  
A nostre ville où regnè tant de los,  
A celle fin que tousjours en repos  
Sa sainte gloire eternellement vive.

Do not fall into the crimes that it has committed,  
The gods will be friends toward our state,  
Since their divine hand is gracious.  
But very often happiness and glory  
Swell our hearts, making them ambitious  
As well as forgetting the grace of the great gods;  
They also do not remember our wealth.  
May the heavens assure that this misery does not come upon  
Our city where reigns so much praise,  
To this end may its holy glory  
Live eternally in peace.



### Appendix: Notes on the Translation

<sup>1</sup> An “s” is added to “surmonte” to correctly conjugate “surmonter” in the second person singular of the present tense.

<sup>2</sup> According to Plutarch, Sardanapalus’ tomb reads, “These are still mine—what I ate, and my worth love-frolics,” revealing Sardanapalus’ love for pleasure. In this context, it simply seems to be a rhetorical question referring to the fate of Sardanapalus’ state.

<sup>3</sup> An “s” is added to “dépité” to correctly conjugate “dépiter” in the second person singular of the present tense.